

## H. J. BRETT & CO'S. STATEMENT AS TO THEIR WASHINGTON COUNTY CONVICT CAMP

### They Say Charges of Bad Conditions Are False.

MATTER IS INVESTIGATED BY  
COMMITTEES FROM FOUR DIFF-  
ERENT COUNTIES AND FAVOR-  
ABLE REPORTS ARE MADE.  
STORY OF INVESTIGATIONS.

Clarkson, Fla., March 4, 1905.  
Editor Pensacola Journal.

During the last past two or three months the people of West Florida have heard a great deal about the convict camp of H. J. Brett & Co., located in Washington county, Florida, and since this matter is of vital importance to all loyal citizens, I feel that the whole truth should be made public.

The firm of H. J. Brett & Co., naval stores manufacturers, is under contract with nearly all of the West Florida counties for the hire of the county convicts, or those upon whom jail sentences are imposed. The county of Walton is included in the list, and about six months ago the Breeze, published at DeFuniak Springs, in Walton county, began a vehement agitation of the good roads question, denouncing the leasing of the county convicts, and advocating their employment on the public roads. Now, the Breeze is a rankerous advocate of good roads, and I admit that the good roads movement is worthy of all commendation; but this same Breeze, always erratic, unstable and sensational, resorted to evil, in order that good might result. Deeming a legitimate, gradual education of the people along this line, too slow, it fell foul of the convict system in general and of the Brett camp in particular, and in order to make the people adopt its own abhorred and distorted view, flushed its columns with falsehood and misrepresentation. The editor of the Breeze, if confronted with the facts that a full investigation has developed, would probably say that he was guided by reports that had every appearance of being reliable. But the boldness with which he has published statements that were absolutely false, stamps as almost criminal his failure to ascertain the facts, before branding his fellow citizens as so cowardly cruel as to inflict privation, hunger and cold upon those whom an inkind Fate, or adverse surroundings had placed in their power.

No one has more sympathy for our social outcasts, and those who are branded as criminals, than I, and no

one would be more reluctant to impose conditions that would make their lot harder. I know the emotions of shame and remorse, and the hungering for something better, that rends the hearts of the majority of those who are committed to prison, and I make it my business to see that those who are sent to our camp are treated in a considerate and humane manner, given plenty of wholesome food, and provided with warm comfortable quarters for rest and repose. In these quarters the whites and the blacks are entirely separated, and are not corralled together as has been falsely stated.

But the Breeze had started the ball rolling, the Walton county commissioners wanted to work their convicts on the public roads, and an influential citizen of their own county had expressed himself as desirous of contracting for their convict labor. The sluice gates were open, the movement had gained impetus, and something had to be done. And so it happened that on a bright SUNDAY morning a committee of the County Commissioners of Walton county turned their faces eastward and wended their way to the "iniquitous" camp at which their "poor unfortunates" were confined—on Sunday morning, when the people of Walton county were gathered at their churches for worship, and while the church bells of classic DeFuniak Springs were calling men and women away from the things of the world, and closer to God, these representative men slipped out from the holy surroundings and hid them away at the people's expense, to look after the people's business. And what was the result? They did what they came to do, and what they wanted to do. They found fault with everything connected with the camp and made an altogether adverse report. It has been said that, bad as this old world is, and soiled as it is in sin and error, it would be difficult to find anything that is altogether bad and totally depraved; but the Committee from Walton county decided that the convict camp of H. J. Brett & Co. is a notable and outrageous exception to this general rule.

We felt that an injustice had been done us, and immediately requested all the counties with which we had contracts, to send like committees of investigation. The counties of Santa Rosa, Holmes, Washington and Jackson complied with this request, with the result that all of the committees reported favorably, and some of them very complimentary.

Walton county's committee reported that our stockade was located on low, wet and unhealthy ground, but in the few days elapsing between the time of their visit and the visits of the other four committees, this same ground had, if we are to believe all five reports, grown to be elevated and well drained. The Breeze stated positively that the inmates of the camp were given only Irish potatoes as food for several days at a time, but when these four unbiased committees came, their most rigid private questioning of the convicts themselves brought out the fact that they had been abundantly supplied with good, wholesome food at all times since they had been confined at the camp.

Two of these committees made written reports, and I have letters from clerks of the two boards, all of which I here insert:

Report From Santa Rosa County.  
To the Honorable Board of County Commissioners, Santa Rosa county, Florida:

Gentlemen:—Pursuant to the order of the board, appointing me to examine into the conditions of the convict camp of Messrs. H. J. Brett & Co. and on the way the convicts were treated there, I beg leave to make the following report.

1st. I find that the convicts get plenty to eat.

2d. I find that they have reasonably good bedding.

3rd. I find that they have separate departments for white and black.

4th. I find a stove (heater) in each department.

5th. I find a closet in a separate room.

I find Ira Sims, the cook, washer and darrer, and I questioned him, as I did all the others, separately from any of the lessors or guards, and he feeds the others and gives them plenty to eat, also that he is not confined or guarded, and has all the privileges he could expect. Miller, the other convict from our county, says he is treated as well as he could expect.

I find that they have plenty of mattresses and cover. Some of the older comforts and blankets are not clean, but I don't suppose they could well be kept in condition in the colored department.

I found one white prisoner there, from Jackson county, and he said he could not complain of the treatment, as everything was as well as could be expected.

Very respectfully submitted,  
J. M. SEIGLER, Committee.  
January 17th, 1905.

Report From Holmes County.  
Westville, Fla., Feb. 6, 1905.  
To the Honorable Board of County Commissioners for Holmes county, Florida, Greeting:

We, the undersigned members of your board, appointed to visit the convict camp of H. J. Brett & Company, in Washington county, Florida, investigate the conditions of convicts confined there, and report to your honorable board, respectfully submit the following report:

On the 17th day of January, 1905, we visited the said convict camp and made a thorough investigation of the conditions of convicts confined there, as regards sanitary conditions, food, housing, clothing and so forth.

We found the stockade-house to be roomy, neat and well heated with two

good heaters, located on ground with good elevation and fair drainage. We found in this stockade-house a partition separating white from colored prisoners, and the convicts told us that the inmates of the two colors were not kept together. The bedding in this stockade-house seemed amply sufficient and comfortable.

We were not present at any regular meal time, but we saw a man eating his dinner from a tin pail, and he told us that all the convicts had plenty to eat. The cook for the camp also told us the same. The man we saw eating his dinner was a white man and the cook was a negro. Both were convicts and talked with us freely and confidentially.

On the whole, we consider the condition at this convict camp all that could be expected at an institution of this kind, in the matter of neatness, health and comfort. In fact, we consider the management there as far above the average.

Respectfully submitted,  
H. H. BROWN,  
J. R. LEVINS,  
Members of Committee.

Letter From the Clerk of the Jackson County Board.

Marianna, Fla., Feb. 11, 1905.  
H. J. Brett & Company,  
Bonifay, Florida.

Dear Sirs:—The committee, composed of H. H. Lewis, Sheriff, and J. M. Barnes, member of the board of county commissioners of Jackson county, appointed by the board of county commissioners on January 7, ult., to investigate your convict camp in which a number of Jackson county convicts are confined, made a verbal report to the Board of commissioners on the 6th inst. The report covered the whole ground, and was indeed satisfactory. Only two points were mentioned where there was any room for complaint—one referring to bedding of prisoners, and one to the lack of window shutters on the cells where the prisoners are confined. The committee told the commissioners of your pledge to attend to this matter at once. The commissioners were indeed glad to know that the reports sent out, as to the unsanitary conditions of your camp, and the mistreatment of the prisoners, were merely fabrications, with little or no truth in the assertions made.

Very truly yours,  
W. A. McRAE.

Letter From the Clerk of the Board of Washington County.  
Vernon, Fla., Feb. 10, 1905.  
Mr. H. J. Brett,

Clarkson, Fla.  
Dear Sir:—No written report was filed, but Mr. Swindle made a very complimentary verbal report of what he found there.

Yours very truly,  
W. C. LOCKEY, Clerk.  
(This letter from Mr. Lockey was in reply to my request for a copy of the committee's report on the state of affairs at our camp.)

These facts need but to be stated for any reasonable man to see that in all this Walton county hubbub there was something other than a desire for right, truth and justice, and to see, also, that a great deal of wilful and malicious misrepresentation has entered into this attempt to make it appear that we are heartless and inhuman. But we have been vindicated by unbiased official reports and are now willing to trust judgment at the hands of our fellow citizens of Florida.

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**FLORIDA PRESS ASSOCIATION**

COL. APPLEYARD TALKS OF

COMING MEETING AT LAKE

CITY—SESSION FOR

BUSINESS ONLY.

The Jacksonville Times-Union a day or so ago contained the following interview relative to the coming meeting of the Florida Press Association:

Colonel T. J. Appleyard, editor of the Lake City Index, and secretary and treasurer of the Florida Press Association, was at the Aragon last night.

To a Times-Union reporter Mr. Appleyard said that the coming meeting of the Florida Press Association at Lake City March 22-24, bids fair to have the largest attendance of any in the history of the body. Nearly every assignment made by the executive committee has been accepted, he says, and the people of Lake City are enthusiastic over having the Florida quill drivers among them for a few days.

"This session," said Mr. Appleyard, "will be for business only. We departed from our usual custom last year in Jacksonville, and went off on a jaunt. The result was that matters we should have discussed—of interest and benefit to ourselves and the state—were not attended to. We will have an outing this summer—possibly the arrangements I am making will take them to Carolina—but at this meeting we are going to talk about things that will help us all. The school system, the state fair and the primary election law are all assigned places on the program. Prof. Guillian has agreed to tell us about the first named, and what he says will be discussed by some of the best debaters in Florida. Colonel Stovall of Tampa says he will be on hand, to show why a state fair is of benefit to us, and that he will handle his subject in a masterly manner without saying. Colonel Slocum of the St. Petersburg Times, a sketch artist and cartoonist of prominence, will tell of the primary graffer, while Colonel Joe Humphries will discuss the subject with him from the standpoint of elected and defeated candidates. Frank Walpole has also announced that he will be there, and Frank Maye, never misses. Governor Broward writes me he will attend and make a talk. Besides these, Dodson of Atlanta and the Southern Printers Warehouse Co. of Washington have promised to come down with an exhibit for the boys—an attention we have never had before. We can take care of the crowd, and special rates will be made by the hotels. Every one of the transportation lines, through their passenger departments, has granted the usual courtesies, applications for which will be sent to members this week. This will include a lady member of the editor's family. You can just say that this is to be a memorable gathering, and a high old time will be had."

Colonel Appleyard came down especially to meet the distinguished New York Democrat, Hon. Elliott Danforth, and accompany him and his wife to Tallahassee. Colonel Edwin Brobston will show the visitors around the city today, and tomorrow morning they leave for Florida's capitol city.

Hives are a terrible torment to the little folks, and to some older ones. Easily cured. Doan's Ointment never fails. Instant relief, permanent cure. At any drug store, 50 cents.

## GERMANS ARE GOOD CITIZENS

FLORIDA SHOULD MAKE EFFORT  
TO PROFIT BY ESTABLISH-

MENT OF NEW GERMAN

LINE TO SOUTH-

ERN PORTS.

(Tampa Times.)

The Times has always stood as the advocate of systematic work along the line of encouraging immigration, and events that have transpired in the south within the past few years have only added additional earnestness to its pleas.

The south is in the transition stage. It is building faster than any other section of the country. It is offering greater inducements than any other section to the arrivals from the old countries of Europe. Like many another good thing, however, this fact is not appreciated, and as a result, thousands starve in New York tenements, when plenty would be theirs in the south.

Collier's Weekly in its current issue has the following interesting paragraph in regard to the institution of a new steamship line that is to deflect tourists travel from the populous north to portions of the south:

"The North German Lloyd Steamship company has decided to establish a new emigrant line between Bremen and Galveston, with a view to dividing the stream of immigration that is now congesting New York and Chicago. This is in accordance with the views of Commissioner-General Sargent, who has urged that every effort should be made to distribute the European arrivals over the country. Texas alone has room for more than the entire population of Germany. The attractions of the south are beginning to be appreciated by American homeseekers as well. One line of railroad took 487 of them from Chicago to a single county in Alabama within six weeks. More new settlers are entering Texas, now than for years past, and Oklahoma, Mississippi and Alabama are receiving substantial additions to their population. The railroad agents in the northeastern states report that the migration from that region to the British possessions has subsided, and that the stream is running toward the southwest. During the statehood debate in the senate it was asserted that Oklahoma and the Indian territory which had 790,381 inhabitants in 1900, had grown since the census to nearly 1,500,000."

Here is a proposition that Tampa and all Florida should not be slow to grasp. Vessels rounding the Florida peninsula and sailing to Galveston would not be materially delayed by stopping at a point like Tampa, which is almost on the direct route north to Galveston. If proper inducements were held out, if proper energetic action were taken, an alternate steamer on the line, at least, might be induced to stop at this port for the accommodation of emigrants bound to this city. The man who comes from Germany furnish the best of citizens. They are thrifty, frugal, home-loving and home-making. They understand that the dollar is to be made by honest toil, and they are educated in various trades to make this dollar honestly. The advent of a strong German immigration to Tampa, to south Florida, and to the entire state, in fact, would mean the starting up of many new industries. These immigrants have acquired their trade learning in a country where an apprenticeship is more than a name, and their skill would mean the commencement of many varied industries now impossible.

From the time that this line is put in operation, thousands of immigrants will be literally pouring by our doors, to be landed in Texas and other sections, where conditions are no better, and frequently not as good for their welfare as they would be in Florida. To take no action looking to the deflection of a portion of this stream to Tampa would be short-sighted in the extreme.

As good return cargoes could be secured here as in Galveston even though the bulk is not as great, and the market for European commodities would be as heavy in proportion to our population. There is no reason why, with a European steamer line stopping at this port, that the local wholesale houses should not become the main distributing points for European commodities throughout the entire south.

The proposition will bear looking into from every standpoint, and it would not be inadvisable to consider it seriously, chimerical though it may appear to some at first sight.

The Best Cough Syrup.  
S. L. Apple, ex-Probate Judge, Ottawa Co., Kansas, writes: "This is to say that I have used Ballard's Horehound Syrup for years, and that I do not hesitate to recommend it as the best cough syrup I have ever used." 25c, 50c and \$1. Sold by all druggists.

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N. MCK. OERTING,

TAX COLLECTOR.

Escambia Lodge No. 15, F. & A. M.

Regular communication of Escambia Lodge No. 15, F. & A. M., will be held Monday evening, March 6, at 7:30 o'clock. Visiting brethren welcome.

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